

Massachusetts Social Host Laws

Information for parents & caregivers



Message from the Office of Northwestern District Attorney David E. Sullivan

Enacted to protect young people from substances while their brains are still developing, **Massachusetts Social Host Laws apply to both alcohol and cannabis.** They prohibit adults from providing alcohol or cannabis to anyone under age 21. People sometimes think letting young people use these substances in their home or on their property will keep them safe. **This is misguided.**

Please rethink.

Supplying minors with alcohol or cannabis is illegal, unsafe and unhealthy. Too many things can go wrong. People who host gatherings where minors consume alcohol or cannabis risk criminal prosecution. Police who learn of an underage drinking party or gathering have the duty and the right to enter someone's home to make sure everyone is safe.

Mass General Law Chapter 138 Section 34 prohibits adults from providing alcohol to anyone under 21 years old who is not their child and Mass General Law Chapter 94G Section 13(i) prohibits adults from providing cannabis, cannabis products and accessories to anyone under 21 who is not their child. **Consequences for violating these laws may include a fine of up to \$2,000, up to 1 year in jail, or both.**

Not only can adults be prosecuted criminally, they could face costly civil lawsuits and involvement with the Department of Children and Families if something goes awry. Hosts may be held financially responsible if their own child or underage guests do something that causes injury after consuming alcohol or cannabis. Social Host Laws also apply if people rent a hotel room or other location where young people consume substances. These laws also apply to minors who furnish alcohol or marijuana to other young people.

Despite what may be good intentions, there are so many ways underage gatherings can spin out of control: alcohol poisoning, overuse of cannabis, lowered inhibitions causing behavior that puts young people at risk of accidents, misunderstandings, or even sexual assaults.

Parents and care-givers have a great deal of influence on young people, more than many people realize. Let the young people in your life know that **caring adults are paying attention.**

Celebrate safely

Tips for safer celebrations

- Set clear rules
- Know who the guests are
- Supervise parties
- Plan activities to help young people have fun without substances
- Communicate with other parents/caregivers